



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

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OVERVIEW OF THE NEW MARYLAND SMOKE ALARM LAW

Battery Powered Smoke Alarms

Effective July 1, 2013 the New Maryland Smoke Alarm Law requires malfunctioning, non-responsive, and ten year old nine-volt battery powered smoke alarms be replaced with new sealed, tamper resistant smoke alarms incorporating long life batteries and a silence/hush button. All nine-volt battery powered smoke alarms including properly operating units must be replaced with the new, upgraded smoke alarms by January 1, 2018.

Ten Year Replacement

All smoke alarms, hard-wired or battery powered, shall be replaced with an appropriate smoke alarm after 10 years from date of manufacturing. In instances where the date of manufacturing is unknown, the smoke alarm shall be replaced. It is never acceptable to remove any required hard-wired and/or interconnected smoke alarm and replace it with any type of battery only operated device. Required hard-wired smoke alarms shall be replaced with hard-wired smoke alarms with battery backup. Required interconnected smoke alarms (one activates, all sound) shall be replaced with interconnected smoke alarms.

Upgraded Coverage

Existing residential units' smoke alarm coverage must be upgraded to have at least one approved smoke alarm on every level. The upgrade must be completed by January 1, 2018. Homes built after 1988 should already meet this requirement. This upgrade is required prior to January 1, 2018 when any of the following occur:

1. Any existing smoke alarm is more than 10 years old.
2. Any existing smoke alarm fails to respond or otherwise malfunctions.
3. There is a change of tenant, either rental or purchase.
4. A building permit is issued for an addition or renovation.

Each sleeping room occupied by a deaf or hard of hearing person shall be provided with a smoke alarm suitable to alert a deaf or hard of hearing person.

The goal of the Howard County Office of the Fire Marshal is to achieve as much reliable smoke alarm coverage as possible in older dwellings without burdening the homeowner with excessive costs. The new, upgraded smoke alarms will cost a few more dollars at the time of purchase, however money is saved over the ten-year life of the device since there is no longer a need to purchase nine-volt batteries every year. The new, upgraded smoke alarms allow temporary silencing of the alarm and will reset on their own after a few minutes. All residents and owners are urged to check their smoke alarm coverage and upgrade, if necessary, as soon as possible.

Contact the Office of the Fire Marshal at 410-313-6040 if you have any questions.

TEST YOUR SMOKE ALARMS MONTHLY.